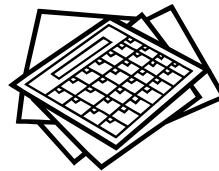


# February 2006



**FCAV**  
**Committee of**  
**Management**  
**2005 – 2006**

## IMPORTANT DATES



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Vacant

**Committee Members**  
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**Liz Neale**

**Bev Pumpa**  
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**John Woolcock**  
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**Peter Van de Burgt**  
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**12<sup>th</sup> March 2006**  
**Daniel Hughes session** for Parents and Carers. See insert.

**6<sup>th</sup> May 2006**  
**Special General Meeting** to decide on new constitution (during the State Conference).

**6<sup>th</sup> May 2006**  
**State Foster Care Conference**  
Held at Hemisphere Conference Centre in Moorabbin

**22 September 2006**  
**Information Session for anyone interested in joining the Committee of Management** from 5.30pm to 7.00pm

**29<sup>th</sup> September 2006 to 30/09/06**  
**National Conference** held in Adelaide

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2006**  
**Induction Day for new Committee Members**

**27<sup>th</sup> October 2006**  
**AGM** from 7.30pm to 9.30pm

**11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2007 through to 16<sup>th</sup> February 2007**  
**IFCO** to be held in New Zealand

Dare to Care - Foster Care  
**Patron Ms Denise Drysdale**  
ABN 30 747 010 099

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Contacts for FCAV Sub Committee & Working Groups also Committee changes	2
Welfare to Work & National Foster Care Conference	3-4
Book Review	5
Berry St Camp	6
Charter for Children in out of home care	7
Book Review & Newspaper Article	8
A Good education for children and young people in out	9-10
Sub Committees of the FCAV	11-12
FCAV Working Groups 2006	13-15
Quality Assurance	16
International Foster	17
Guidelines for investigation allegations against home based carers	18
Membership Form	19
Newsletter	20

## FCAV SUB COMMITTEES

Finance Subcommittee	Peter Van de Burgt, Helen Brooks & Julien Leith (Offers invited)
Policy & Procedures	Offers invited
Constitution	Rebecca Bolton, Sylvia Davey, Peter Kearney, Liz Neale & Peter Van de Burgt

## WORKING GROUPS – FCAV REPRESENTATIVES

Advocate Meeting	Helen Falconer, Ian Seal & Julien Leith
AFCA	Bev Pumpa and Ian Seal
Children's Right Charter	Julien Leith
DHS Liaison	Sandra Creaner, Ian Seal & Julien Leith
Face-to-Face	Bev Pumpa
Foster Care Advisory Group	John Woolcock & Joan Graham
North West Region Home Based Committee	Cheryl Brown
Interim Help Line	Helen Falconer, Lyn Bicknell & Committee Members
Kinship Care	Joan Graham
Leaving Care	Ian Seal
Looking after Children	Sylvia Davey
Quality Assurance	Lucie Kearney
State Conference	Julien Leith (Offers invited)



## COMMITTEE CHANGES

**Resignation:** Maggie Lovell has decided to take a well-earned break from her position as Treasurer, Public Officer and Committee member of FCAV. Maggie has made a fantastic contribution to the committee during her 1½ years of service. She has been extremely diligent in ensuring financial systems are appropriate and accurate and that the duties of Public Officer are properly attended to. Maggie has been unstinting in the efforts she has put into a wide variety of committee work in addition to the roles previously mentioned including proof reading the newsletter, Help Line and State Conference. We hope that Maggie will resume her great contribution to FCAV soon.

### Treasurer Position

**Vacant:** We need an accountant to fill this position. If you know of anyone who may be willing to assist, please let the office know urgently.

**Public Officer** Lucie Kearney is now officially in this role.

### Welcome new Committee Members

**Rebecca Bolton:** Lawyer joining the committee on a pro bono basis through the good will of her employer Middleton's. Rebecca's legal knowledge will be of great benefit in a variety of ways, particularly in developing our new constitution and in raising awareness of legal implications of decisions and activities.

## “WELFARE TO WORK” & FOSTER CARE”

Late last year the Federal Government passed welfare reform legislation commonly known as “Welfare to Work”. Under these provisions, all people on Parenting Payment will be moved to Newstart Allowance once their youngest child turns eight. They are then expected to look for, or obtain, paid work for a minimum of 15 hours a week. This is to start on 1 July 2006.



This proposal was a serious problem for the foster care sector. Approximately one third of foster carers across Australia are on Parenting Payment. If they were moved to the Newstart Allowance, these carers would have to make a choice between fostering and looking for paid work. If we lost so many valuable carers, the gap would have to be filled with some form of group or congregate care. This would be a very expensive option for state/territory governments and, we believe, not as beneficial for the children.

The Australian Foster Care Association (AFCA) carried out a lengthy campaign to have foster care considered “work” for the Welfare to Work provisions. This would mean that carers on Parenting Payment would be exempt from having to find paid work.

AFCA wrote to every federal Member of Parliament and Senator to outline our case. We followed that with interviews on radio and in the press. We also lobbied specific Members of Parliament from different parties. State and territory ministers and their departmental officers were also very concerned about the proposal and wrote to the federal government.

The response from the federal government was disappointing. Minister Andrews said that foster carers may be able to have a temporary exemption on a case by case basis, in recognition of the contribution they made to their communities.

AFCA then started a new round of the campaign, with follow up letters and more contacts with MPs and television coverage. It was tiring, but well worth it.

***“I am very pleased to announce that the proposal for Welfare to Work and foster carers has now been changed”. Foster carers will be automatically exempt from the provision to look for paid work.***

Carers on Parenting Payment will technically be moved to the Newstart Allowance, but they will receive a top up payment so that the money they receive will total the same amount they are currently receiving. Carers will also be required to register with an employment service.

Foster carers must be accredited and current carers to receive this exemption. Proof of this must be given by the carer to Centrelink when requested. If carers are currently on Parenting Payment, they do not need to give this proof to Centrelink for quite some time. New carers will need proof of their fostering role to obtain the exemption. Each carer’s exemption will be reviewed every year, which is usual Centrelink policy.

## “WELFARE TO WORK” & FOSTER CARE Continued ...

This change of heart was a direct result of the hard work of AFCA, non-government bodies, individual carers, departmental officers and state and territory Ministers. Thank you to them all.

Helen Falconer  
AFCA spokesperson on Welfare to Work

NB: At present, the states/territories' departments, foster care associations and AFCA are negotiating with the Federal Department of Employment & Workplace Relations about the guidelines which will be used. Each state/territory has a different system, so these guidelines have to be written carefully so that no foster carer is disadvantaged.

We have been discussing what types of foster carers will be exempt (i.e. mainstream carers, kinship, permanent care, emergency/reception carers), what proof will be necessary for Centrelink, who provides the proof of fostering (the agency or the Department), how often the certificate/form will be required by Centrelink, what happens when a carer is on a break etc. These consultations have been very worthwhile.

The guidelines should be completed by the end of February. More definite information will be in the next newsletter.

*A BIG THANKYOU* to Helen Falconer for her great work on this project!



## NATIONAL FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE



This year, the conference will be held in Adelaide, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September – Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October. The conference venue is the Stamford Grand Adelaide, located on the beachfront at Glenelg. The theme is “Supporting Caring Families: Meeting the Challenges of the Next Five Years”. There will be more information in the next newsletter.

## BEACH HOUSE

**\$50 per week**



This fully furnished retro styled beach house at Cape Paterson is only 1 & ½ hrs drive from Melbourne and only available (at this price) to **volunteers, clients & workers within the welfare** sector for anything from a well earned break to rapport building, and reconnection.

The property offers: 5 min walk to surf beach, sheltered cliff walks, shops, tavern, established native garden, 2 b/r (sleeps 5) additional mattresses available, open plan living, kitchen, microwave, TV, stereo, washing machine, gas heating) You will need to bring your own linen. Bookings are available all year.

For enquiries please contact: Karl Tattersall on 0428523331 or Email: [karl\\_tatt@hotmail.com](mailto:karl_tatt@hotmail.com)

## BOOK REVIEW by Sandra Creaner

### *"PARENT TO PARENT: RAISING YOUR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS"*

Ages 0-13 Years, Jones et. al., 2003, Deakin University and Department of Human Services, Barwon-South Western Region, 186pp.

When I started fostering eight years ago, I soon found myself encountering behaviours that my sisters and friends just hadn't mentioned when they were discussing parenting tips & techniques. I'd ring a friend or family member & ask, "What do you do when your 6 yr old smears faeces all over himself, his pyjamas, the walls and toilet seat?" Unfortunately, my friends & family just couldn't help. This was behaviour they had never encountered. I consulted all the parenting experts...Christopher Green, Steve Biddulph & Michael Grose...but not even Super Nanny has a chapter or segment on smearing.



Seven & a half years passed. The behaviours grew more extreme over the years &, to the amusement of my family and friends, I've spent the past seven years in a series of parenting classes, play therapy, individual counselling & family therapy sessions. You've probably had this said to you too..."We can't work with the child because he or she is not in a long-term placement. However, we could meet with the carer."

Then one day, a few months ago, someone gave me a copy of Parent to Parent. I began flicking through it fairly sceptically at first, until some of the chapter headings caught my attention:

- The child who seeks to dominate and control their home environment
- The escape artist
- Toileting - Smearing
- Friends and Extended Family - Where did they go?

I started to read, skipping straight to the chapters I thought I would never find in a parenting book. Wow! This was good stuff! However, better than the content (after seven years of therapy I have some basic strategies nowadays), were the quotes from the parents; one of my favourites: "My husband had a real problem in regards to putting locks through the house. So I left him with our child for the weekend, while I went off and did my own thing. He was very understanding after that."

Substitute your greatest challenge, & most critical audience, & you'll see why I love this idea! Reading Parent to Parent was fantastic. These parents really understand. They've been there - done that. They know what it is like to face the challenges I, & other foster Mums & Dads face every day. Reading their stories I finally discovered that there are other parents out there who know what I've been going through. I learnt from their experiences. More importantly, I was heartened by their success.

If you've ever been exhausted, doubted yourself, felt fear, anger & frustration as you parented your special needs child, read this book! You're not alone, & the suggestions in this book can help you move from doubt to self-confidence, frustration to patience, fear & anger to success and happiness! There's an all-important chapter on Looking After Yourself, & a final inspirational message. You'll find this book online at: [http://www.deakin.edu.au/dhs/parent\\_to\\_parent/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/dhs/parent_to_parent/). For a hard copy ring 1800 783783.

## "GREAT IDEA FOR SUPPORTING CARERS"

### BERRY ST CAMP – 2006

#### A Carers View by Tracy

After 3 years as a carer I have finally attended my very first Berry St Camp. I must say it was fantastic & nothing like what I was expecting. I had imagined very basic facilities with one shared amenities block & a queue for the toilet a mile long! I was sure we would be eating gruel ladled from a huge pot in a makeshift kitchen tent with trestle tables & tin plates! But what I discovered with pleasure was Camp Wilkin with great facilities and plenty to do. I would have to say the highlight of camp for me was meeting an excellent bunch of people who after only a short period of time I can now call friends. It was a very humbling experience to meet so many wonderful, dedicated & experienced people who give so much to kids in need.

<p>Camp is for 1 week            Carers &amp; Children 0-3 years free            4-12 years \$80            13 years + \$100</p>
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This years carer training was a level 2 first aid course which was a valuable experience, full of laughs, team bonding & some learning thrown in for good measure. The only downside to the camp experience this year for me was the dreaded gastro bug! Which hit hard & fast and eliminated me from the girl's day out shopping but who needs a day out shopping when you can stay in bed with a gastrolyte icy pole instead? All in all it was a terrific week and big thanks to all who made it possible. I will definitely be back next year.

#### A Young Persons View by Jennelle

I like the Berry St camp because there is always something to do. The location of the camp is even better; it is right near the ocean, which is only about a 15 minute walk away. The activities that we did kept everyone happy and me too! I am in the Adolescent group & my favourite thing that we did would have to be ocean kayaking. It was so much fun. It's like surfing only you are in a kayak and there are two people.

This was my third time to camp Wilkin & I enjoy going back every year because I just love what we do, having a night out, rock climbing, surfing, swimming in the Anglesea lake, high ropes and lots more. I will go back next year too!

<p>If your agency has a great program for supporting carers, let us know!            We hope that publishing good ideas provide inspiration for others .....</p>
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Berry St camp has been in operation for 19 years. In January 2007 it will mark the 20th year of the annual foster camp. Each year approximately 190 children, young people & carers attend the camp and are supported by staff & volunteers who run activities for the children. During the camp the children are provided with an opportunity to participate in numerous activities including initiatives course, rock climbing, snorkelling, surfing etc that encourage teamwork, challenge & above all fun. The carers participate in training during the week & also have a day out that is a special day for them. This year the camp was sponsored by the Baker foundation, Freemason's, Dept Human Services, Soroptimists Shepparton & a number of individual sponsors.

## CHARTER FOR CHILDREN IN OUT OF HOME CARE

By Natalie Altman, Office of the Advocate

The Advocate for Children in Care, now part of the Child Safety Commissioner's Office, has been working for some time on developing a Charter for children in out-of-home care.

Extensive consultations were undertaken to ensure that as many people as possible who work with or care for children in out-of-home care had the opportunity to have a say. In total approximately 500 people were involved in these consultations and provided input to us verbally and in written submissions. This number included 107 children and young people in care that through the assistance of CREATE, participated in special consultations on the Charter.



We also spoke directly with 35 carers and benefited from the ongoing support and input of the Foster Care Association of Victoria, which is represented on our Stakeholder Focus Group that has met regularly to provide advice on the development of the Charter. We are pleased to advise that in the near future, we will be circulating a copy of the draft Charter and a report that summarises the consultations that occurred.

We received a lot of input about the sorts of rights and issues people wanted to see reflected in the Charter. In total, respondents suggested over 80 rights for inclusion in the Charter. Our main concern when developing the draft Charter was to ensure it was a document for children, that is it was simple, not too long and written in child friendly language. We took all the suggestions and worked out what themes they all had in common. We came up with a list of 19 themes or issues which included things like – safety, health, stability, voice – having a say, family, services, leaving care, and support. We then based the rights in the draft Charter on these issues.

In the next month copies of the draft Charter and consultation summary report will be available and we hope that once again people will take the time to comment on the draft Charter. We need to know if we have got it right! Copies of the report and further information can be obtained from our office:

Child Safety Commissioner - 20/570 Bourke St Melbourne - Phone 8601 – 5884, from our website – [www.ocsc.vic.goc.au](http://www.ocsc.vic.goc.au) or by emailing [natalie.altman@ocsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:natalie.altman@ocsc.vic.gov.au)

## NEWSLETTER READER CONTRIBUTIONS

Apart from bringing you news, it would be great if the newsletter could also serve as an information/story exchange for carers. If you have just read a great book or have any stories, ideas, thoughts, suggestions, poems or drawings that you think would interest other carers please send them in. You could email to : [admin@fcav.org](mailto:admin@fcav.org) or post to FCAV, 48 High Street, Northcote, 3070.

## BOOK REVIEW by Jaycee aged 16 years

“Life Strategies for Teens” by Jay McGraw ( Dr Phil’s son)



My mum bought this book for me at the start of this year. I thought “Pffftt, more of this self improvement crap. Why would I want to read this?!?”

Well, I gave it a try one night, when I was bored, and was surprised by how good, true and easy to read it was. Normally I hate this kind of “stuff” but actually it really worked for me. It’s changed the way I see my life and definitely for the best.

He explains these 10 life law things and it’s kind of about the psychology of life. You would think it would be boring but it’s not and it really helped me. If you are thinking of reading this book, I recommend you do. I guarantee that by the time you’re done, you will think it was worth it.

## FOSTER SECTOR FACING EXTREME SHORTAGE OF CARERS

By MICHELLE DRAPER & MARIKA DOBBIN

The following article was published in The Melbourne Times and The Heidelberg Weekly on February 7th, 2006. Reprinted here with kind permission from the editor.

VICTORIA'S largest independent family welfare organisation has called for a complete overhaul of the state's foster-care system amid claims the sector is in crisis. Berry Street Victoria chief executive Sandie de Wolf said a continuing decline in the number of foster carers was a "major issue". "If the current trends continue within the next 10 years foster care won't exist," she said. According to unpublished data from the Department of Human Services, in each of the past five years the number of foster carers who stopped providing services has exceeded the number of incoming carers.

The data showed that numbers of new foster carers have been in steady decline since 1995. Ms de Wolf said two major changes needed to take place to turn the situation around. Firstly, agencies needed more staff to properly support foster carers, their families and children placed in care. Secondly, carers should be reimbursed fully for all their costs. "We need a new model of foster care that recognises the complexity of the issues that carers need to deal with. We just can't expect to have people in the community volunteering to take on damaged kids without adequate support and reimbursement."

Ms de Wolf said foster carers often juggled the demands of their own family with the complex needs of a foster child. The calls come as the Darebin branch of Anglicare, which runs foster care for teenagers, was forced to temporarily shut its books due to a lack of places. Anglicare Preston is down to only 13 foster homes and has had to reject more than 40 homeless young people since Christmas.

Ms de Wolf said that Berry Street's greatest need for foster carers was for boys aged eight to 10. Berry Street Victoria has 35 centres across Victoria supporting 5000 children and families each year. The State Government introduced new laws last year including tougher checks for foster carers and a statewide register of carers.

## A GOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG

The Partnering Agreement: 'School Attendance & Engagement of Children and Young People in Out of Home Care' was launched on the 13 May 2003. The Partnering Agreement reflects the commitment of the Department of Education & Training and the Department of Human Services to improving the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people in out of home care. (Independent schools are not obliged to participate in this agreement but may choose to do so).



As we would all agree, children & young people in out of home care have a right to be protected, cared for & educated in a way that maximises their life opportunities. Critical to educational achievement is positive engagement with educational institutions & a home environment that is supportive & values education. Regular, frequent attendance at school is necessary for successful engagement with education. Schools also play a critical role in supporting the social and emotional development of children & young people. The Partnering Agreement reinforces good practice & offers strategies to strengthen the response to the educational issues & social needs of children & young people in out of home care. It also provides an opportunity to monitor the educational achievement & attendance of young people in out of home care more closely, enabling schools to use a more targeted approach in addressing issues.

**A key requirement of the Partnering Agreement is the development of Student Support Groups (SSGs) & Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for all children and young people in out of home care.**

The school Principal is responsible for establishing a SSG for all children & young people in out of home care to provide additional support for them to address issues that impact on their educational achievement. The SSG process will supplement existing parent/carer teacher interviews & complements the Care and Placement Planning process undertaken within the Looking After Children framework.

**The aim of a Student Support Group is to ensure that those with the most knowledge of & responsibility for the child or young person work together to support attendance & establish shared educational & social goals. This group will also monitor & evaluate the child or young person's progress. The Student Support Group will facilitate the development of a preventative approach & is responsible for the development of an Individual Education Plan to support & retain children and young people in school.**

A student support group will consist of:

- the parent, guardian or caregiver of the child or young person (whichever is most appropriate as indicated by the DHS case manager).
- the DHS Protective Services case manager or a Community Service Organisation case manager.
- a teacher or Year Level Coordinator nominated as having responsibility for the child or young person.
- the Principal or nominee to act as chairperson.
- the Student Welfare Coordinator and/or Student Support Service Staff.
- the child or young person (where appropriate)

## A GOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUT OF HOME CARE - Continued ...

In order to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Partnering Agreement, DHS regions were requested to provide snapshot educational data as at 30 November 2004 & 24 June 2005 (end of term 2) regarding all school aged children and young people in out of home care. This survey sought information regarding the number of school aged children & young people enrolled in school and the number who had SSGs established & IEPs developed.

The 24 June 2005 survey indicated that over 800 students in out of home care have SSGs and IEPs. This is a positive development which allows these students to receive the additional support they require to engage effectively with school & achieve positive outcomes. There is still however a large number of students without these important supports in place and significant variation across regions. In order to continue to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Partnering Agreement, DHS regions were requested to repeat the snapshot data collection process as at the 30 November 2005. Data is currently being compiled and will be analysed. It is hoped that we will see further improvement in this area.

Whilst responsibility for the establishment of the SSG & IEP rests with the school principal, the case manager's involvement in this process is critical to the development of a collaborative relationship with the school and in working together to ensure positive outcomes for the student. Protective workers or case managers are responsible for notifying the school that the child or young person is in out of home care. They participate in the SSG & provide input into the development of the IEP.

Caregivers obviously have a critically important role in supporting the education of the children and young people in their care. If you have any queries regarding the existence or establishment of a SSG or development of an IEP for a child or young person in your care you should contact your agency case worker in the first instance. The Departments will be seeking feedback and input from carers about the experiences of children in their care with these processes in the coming year.

All regions of DE&T and DHS also have a nominated regional contact person to coordinate the regional implementation process and many regions have Regional Implementation Groups that may involve your organisation.

### GOOD NEWS

Nora Risso and her partner Adam are delighted by the safe arrival of Luca Joseph and Ava Leni born at 8.20am on Thursday 9th February. Luca weighed 6lb 5oz (2868g) and Ava weighed 6lb 91/2oz (2982g). The twins are doing really well and Nora is also fine. Adam and Nora are just ecstatic.

Many readers will know Nora as the Foster Care liaison person at the Department of Human Services until she took maternity leave late last year.

We thought this was cute ... Ava had been crying a lot and wouldn't settle on her own but once the babies were put together in the crib they both settled down to sleep!



## SUB COMMITTEES OF THE FCAV COMMITTEE

Please contact convenors (see front page for contact details) if you wish to participate, have questions or would like to contribute ideas.

### Constitution

**Convenor: Rebecca Bolton.** Rebecca is a lawyer who has joined our committee of management on a pro bono basis through her employer Middleton's. We are very appreciative of the expertise Rebecca brings to this group and also for the additional pro bono assistance Freehill's have agreed to provide.



**Members:** Sylvia Davey, Peter Kearney, Liz Neale, Peter Van de Burgt.

Preparation of a new constitution is well underway. It is based on the modern, very simple and basic Freehill's model and will be presented to the membership during the State Foster Care Conference on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May. Our current constitution has many problems and is totally unsuited to our new level of operation with an office and employed staff. Therefore it is urgent that we have a new constitution appropriate to our needs.

### Finance

**Convenor: Treasurer** – This position vacant as Maggie Lovell recently resigned.

We are seeking an accountant to fill this position. Ideas and contacts are very welcome.

**Members:** Peter Van de Burgt, Helen Brooks & Julien Leith. Additional members with financial knowledge and experience is urgently needed.

### Responsibilities include ensuring:

- Proper accounting and book keeping processes are established and followed
- The organisation meets its fiscal, auditing and statutory responsibilities
- Resources are utilised in accordance with FCAV priorities
- FCAV's financial performance and position are sound
- Published accounts give a fair and true view of the organisation's financial position and performance

### Members of the finance sub committee are also responsible for:

- Overseeing the development of budgets for committee approval within appropriate timelines
- Making recommendations to the committee of management about budget priorities

### Policy & Procedures

**Convenor: Julien Leith**

**Members: very welcome!!!**

This group is currently being formed and will be working with a consultant to develop policies and protocols for the association. If you would like to help, Julien would love to hear from you!

## SUB COMMITTEES OF THE FCAV COMMITTEE

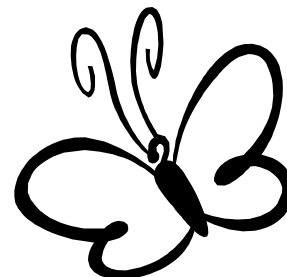
### Continued .....

#### State Conference

**Convenor: Julien Leith**

**Members: very welcome!!!**

Theme for 2006 is "Striving Together". Please let office know of any great ideas for keynote speakers, workshops or anything else!



#### Helpline Project

The Foster Care Advocacy and Support Team from Queensland Foster Care Association (FAST) recently presented this project to the Help Line working group and representatives from community service organisations and regional Department of Human Services. The presentation was inspiring and demonstrated what enormous support a Help Line provided by carers for carers can be. It was interesting to hear how it has also developed as a resource utilised by both foster care workers and departmental staff.

There was enthusiasm from agencies and DHS in participating in a Reference Group to provide guidance in the development of a memorandum of understanding between FCAV, DHS and community service organisations and also in the development of Help Line policies and protocols. The FCAV Help Line working group and committee of management is very appreciative of this input, which will be of assistance to the committee of management in making decisions about the operations of the Help Line.

The FAST project have generously offered to provide their training material to FCAV and will assist in delivery of the first training program for Help Line volunteers which we hope to hold in April. If you are interested in becoming a Help Line volunteer or know of someone you think would make a good volunteer, please contact the FCAV office and let us know.

In the interim, if you have a foster care concern that you would like to discuss with a fellow carer, or need information about, you could contact:

- Helen Falconer on Ph 9735 1381 or email [hfalconer@medleywillows.com.au](mailto:hfalconer@medleywillows.com.au)
- Lynnette Bicknell on Ph 9531 7824 or email [lynettebicknell@yahoo.com.au](mailto:lynettebicknell@yahoo.com.au)
- A member of the FCAV Committee of Management
- FCAV office on Ph 9489 9770 or email [admin@fcav.org](mailto:admin@fcav.org)

## **FCAV WORKING GROUPS 2006**

FCAV is very active in promoting views and ideas from carers who, as the 24/7 carers for children and young people, are in an excellent position to make important contributions. Committee members and representatives seek your input through attendance at local support group meetings, phone calls and the office. If you have some ideas, views or questions relating to any of these groups, please phone or email the representative listed at the office.

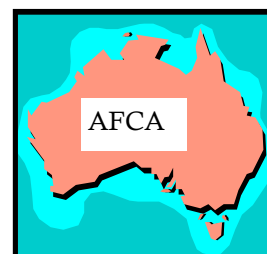
If the representative is a committee member you will find their contact details on the cover of this newsletter. We are there to represent you and the children you care for, but to do so – we need to hear from you!!

### **ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN OUT OF HOME CARE LIAISON GROUP** **FCAV Representatives: Helen Falconer, Ian Seal & Julien Leith**

This is a great opportunity for FCAV to raise carer concerns about processes around children in care. We hear first hand about the work undertaken by the Advocate's office and have the opportunity to comment. Issues discussed include the Allegations Document, Charter of Children's Rights, Complaints/Feedback processes for Adults on behalf of Children in Care and process problems relating to children in care.

### **AUSTRALIAN FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION (AFCA)** **FCAV representatives: Bev Pumpa and Ian Seal**

AFCA is a membership based, voluntary organisation supporting and representing the voices of foster carers, their families and the children they care for throughout Australia. AFCA works in partnership with other community organisations in the child and family welfare sector to provide the support necessary for children and young people unable to live at home to achieve better outcomes.



AFCA addresses national issues, policies, standards, practice and support for foster, relative and kinship carers and kids in care and provides support to the state associations as requested. AFCA has worked hard as a lobby group in relation to the Welfare to Work legislation and also has a very effective working relationship with Centrelink.

AFCA is made up of two members of each state/territory foster care association. Current office bearers are Ken Aberly (Tas) President, Bryan Smith (QLD) Vice President, Andrea Cairns (NSW) Secretary, Judy Hansen (N.T.) Treasurer and Sue Mannion (ACT) Public Officer. FCAV participates in bi monthly teleconferences. More information about AFCA can be found on their web site [www.fostercare.org.au](http://www.fostercare.org.au).

### **DHS/FCAV Liaison Bi Monthly Meetings** **FCAV representatives: Sandra Creaner, Ian Seal & Julien Leith**

Provide the opportunity to discuss issues with senior staff of DHS including Christina Asquini Director of Child Protection, David Clements Manager of Placement & Support, Helen Brain Unit Manager of Intercountry Adoption Service & Lisa Rodda Program Advisor.

## **FCAV WORKING GROUPS 2006 Continued ...**

### **Face to Face (F2F)**

**FCAV representative: Bev Pumpa**

**Convened by CREATE** – the peak body for children and young people who are in or have experienced being ‘in care’. It is a national partnership forum of consumers, governments, carers and service providers involved in the out of home care sector for children and young people. Initiated in 1997 to enable collaborative exploration of best practice and strategies to improve outcomes for children and young people in care. Principles – collaboration, participation, partnership and learning – to provide a framework through which to seek a range of innovative solutions to known issues.

F2F hold national forums approx every 2 years. The next one will be in 2007. These forums facilitate a process of engagement, exchange and learning in a collaborative environment. The outcomes of F2F are presented back to each state and territory Minister, the relevant federal Minister/s and the Community Services Ministers/Council meetings. Meetings are bimonthly by teleconference

### **Foster Care Advisory Group**

**FCAV Representatives: John Woolcock & Joan Graham**

**Convened by Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare** to investigate and develop strategies to address the increasingly difficult pressures of recruitment and retention of volunteer foster carers. Meets bimonthly.

### **Home Based Care Forum**

A joint initiative of DHS and FCAV, coordinated by DHS Program Advisor Lisa Rodda. Forum is held in November.

### **Kinship Care Network**

**FCAV representative: Joan Graham**

Statewide meeting of workers from DHS and agencies involved in kinship care services meeting bimonthly.

### **Leaving Care Statewide Working Group**

**FCAV Representative: Ian Seal**

The Statewide Leaving Care forum focuses on current issues and endeavours to feed into policy. The Leaving Care group has promoted the idea that government responsibility for young people should extend until they are 25 yrs in line with the United Nations definition of young person.

## **FCAV WORKING GROUPS 2006 Continued ...**

LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATEWIDE REF. GP

**FCAV representative: Sylvia Davey, Ph 56 787 235 Email tdavey@nex.net.au**

Purpose: To ensure the LAC material is properly used and obstacles to its use are overcome. Links strongly with the Quality Assurance Strategy, although participation in LAC is by voluntary agreement, not required. Meetings are bimonthly.

NORTH WEST REGION HOME BASED CARE (HBC) SUB COMMITTEE

**FCAV Representative: Cheryl Brown Ph 9379 2563**

**Membership** of this working group includes representation from the following: the community services organisations in the North West Region that provide a range of home based care services to children and young people aged between 0-18 years, the Victorian Child Care Agency (VACCA), the Foster Care Association of Victoria, Caregivers, DHS Placement and Support, and Child Protection. The group meets monthly.

### **Purpose and aims:**

- To act as an operational sub committee of the regional Placement and Support Partnerships
- Group and focus specifically on the delivery of HBC services in the North West Region
- To review current Home Based Care operations and support future redevelopment of Home Based Care within the North West Region .
- To develop responsive Regional HBC initiatives.
- To undertake regional analysis and strategic planning of Home Based Care in the North West Region
- To develop implementation strategies for new HBC Central or Regional initiatives, such as Statewide Caregiver Training, Allegations of Abuse Against Caregivers Guidelines, etc.
- To develop responsive practice to Regional HBC issues, such as caregiver recruitment, catchments, caregiver training, publicity & recruitment activities, etc.
- To report to the Regional Placement and Support Partnerships Group.

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY (QAS) FOR OUT OF HOME CARE  
REFERENCE GROUP:

**FCAV representative: Lucie Kearney**

The group has developed processes for internal annual reviews of community organisations providing out of home care.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

All community service organisations completed their first internal review by June 2005. The data has now been analysed and an action plan is being developed between community service organisations and their Regional Department of Human Service. A state wide report will be available on the department of human services web site soon. ([www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au) > hot link > office for children > quality assurance strategy)

If you would like to know what is happening in your area, contact your community service organisation. You or your local support group may like to request feedback from your agency focusing on key findings relevant to carers, as the full document and action plan, whilst available, may be rather tedious to read!



As the 2005 reviews were internal, it is impossible to make valid comparisons across Victoria. However the following issues were identified relating to home based care:

More timely and effective planning and review processes including LAC  
 Better record keeping - use of LAC records  
 - Life Books

Ensuring safety through:

- annual care giver reviews
- developing complaints processes for children and young people in care
- implementing/developing new allegations of abuse guidelines
- making sure required policies and procedures are up to date leading to improved work practices
- improving health care arrangements: medical and dental assessments

The QAS is now developing an external evaluation process using independent consultants. An external review is to be conducted every 3 years. 3 pilot external reviews of Home Based and Residential Care programs are nearly completed using 3 external consultancy firms as follows:

Gippsland Region, Kilmany Uniting Care – KPMG consultants  
 Hume Region, Berry Street Victoria – “Evolving Change” consultants  
 North and West Region, MacKillop Family Services – “Effective Change” consultants

Following these pilots a cycle of 3 yearly external reviews is about to commence. When your agency is reviewed all carers will receive a questionnaire and in addition a sample of children and carers will be interviewed.

## FOSTERING OUR TAONGA

X IFCO XV Biennial International Foster Care  
Conference Hamilton, New Zealand  
**11 - 16 February, 2007**



### **“Fostering Our Taonga - Children are our treasure as are those who care for them”**

Foster care today presents exceptional challenges as we struggle to care for those children who are the victims of social breakdown, parental incapability, child abuse of many kinds, and extreme social disadvantage. This conference has its focus on these children and young people and those who care for them. While we each face different challenges in our own countries, research shows that common themes exist internationally, such as the increasing levels of trauma experienced by the children and their consequent high levels of psychological, emotional and behavioural disturbance. Additionally, research shows that sociological and economic change has affected the availability of the most precious resource, foster carers. How do we address these issues internationally and how can we learn from one another?

IFCO has been instrumental in the international transmission of foster care knowledge and practice. This conference again offers this opportunity. The conference is organised around the issues facing the four major participants in Foster Care. Each of these themes will be addressed by Keynote speakers, seminars, workshops and papers throughout the conference. Although each theme has been assigned a particular day, there may be some overlap, according to the subjects of papers offered. The themes are: Children are our Treasure , Families/Whanau are our treasure, Communities are our Treasure & Developing New Treasures.

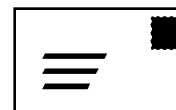
I urge all involved with foster care to attend this Conference. Call for papers are open now, their web site is being continually updated, for the latest visit: [www.ifconz07.org.nz/](http://www.ifconz07.org.nz/)

Contact: John Hulskamp, Treasurer, IFCO, on (03) 9596 2782, or email [treasurer@ifco.info](mailto:treasurer@ifco.info). John is resident in Australia, is a foster parent himself. John has been on the IFCO Board since 2003.

## YOU'VE GOT MAIL

We could really use your Help!

As the number of people on our mailing list for this newsletter has greatly increased, so too has the cost of circulation, not to mention our workload! In order to keep costs down, we would like to distribute the newsletter via email wherever possible.



If you are currently on our mailing list and have access to email, we would love to hear from you advising us to change you from the “mailing list” over to the “emailing list”. Please don’t forget to include your name and postal address in your email changeover request. You can contact us via email at **admin@fcav.org**

Thankyou for helping us out!

## GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST HOME BASED CAREGIVERS

Guidelines for investigating allegations against home-based caregivers is now available and can be downloaded from the Department of Human Services website at: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/commcare](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/commcare).

Hardcopies are available from Lisa Rodda, Program Adviser, Out of Home Care at the Department of Human Services, 9616 7199. Alternatively, copies can be obtained from the FCAV.

The guidelines have been developed to ensure that allegations against caregivers are responded to in a consistent and timely manner. The purpose of the guidelines is to:

- Ensure that the safety and wellbeing of the child remains paramount throughout any investigation of abuse, neglect or inadequate care provision in home based care;
- Ensure a consistent and commonly understood approach to responding to and investigating allegations concerning children in home based care;
- Ensure that caregivers are treated fairly and with respect throughout the investigation process;
- Provide guidelines for resolving disputes about allegations while maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the child;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of those in the investigation.

### FCAV MEMBERSHIP

The FCAV Executive and Committee of Management encourage you to become a FCAV Member. This will allow you to vote at any upcoming AGM and at any Special Meetings.

As a FCAV Member you will automatically receive the bimonthly newsletter.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA Inc

I, (name) \_\_\_\_\_

of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb/Town \_\_\_\_\_ (post code) \_\_\_\_\_

desire to formally become a Member of the Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc.

I am an accredited foster carer with (name of agency) \_\_\_\_\_

I have been an accredited Foster Carer since (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be bound by the Rules of the Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc as in force from time to time.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date / /

Please return to: **FCAV Inc** or by fax to  
**PO Box 729**  
**Northcote**  
**Vic 3070** **(03) 9489 9119**

The FCAV advises that all the above details will be treated with confidentiality and, as promised in the past, none of the above information will be passed on to a third party.

**Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc.  
RENEWED VISION, MISSION AND PURPOSE**

The FCAV has identified four core values that underpin its existence and operations now and into the future. The four values were enunciated by Adjunct Professor Jan Carter at the FCAV 2003 State Conference and strongly resonated with the organisation and its members. They are “*cherishment*”, “*connectedness*”, “*community*” and “*civility*”. These values articulate a vision for the children in home-based care, the system to which they have entered and in which the FCAV and others operate.

**Vision :** *For all children in care to be cherished, connected and treated with compassion.*

**Mission:** *To strengthen foster families and enhance the wellbeing of the children in their care.*

**Statement of purposes**

*To advance a compassionate and effective foster care system that ensures the nurturing and protection of foster children; supports the needs of foster families and acknowledges the role of the biological family.*

*To promote a foster care system in which foster carers and their families can effectively help, nurture and care for foster children.*

*To promote a foster care system that prevents any on-going abuse to, or by, the children and protects the foster family unit.*

*FCAV seeks to achieve these purposes by, but not limited to*

- (a) providing and facilitating information and support networks, counselling, advice, referrals, and any other means of support and assistance for the foster carers*
- (b) research, collection and dissemination of information on or relating to foster care for carers, agencies, and other interested participants*
- (c) promoting and encouraging foster carers and the recognition of the important role they and their families play in the foster care system*
- (d) assisting all participants in the foster care system to develop policies and guidelines to enhance the nurturing and protection of the foster children and that support the needs of the foster families*
- (e) promoting and facilitating effective training and on-going development for foster carers.*

**FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC  
NEWSLETTER RENEWAL**

**(Please tick appropriate box)**

- |                          |                                 |                          |  |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Approved Foster Carer           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Donation of \$10 per annum                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Interested in making a donation | <input type="checkbox"/> | (Nominate amount) \$ _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Organisation/Agency             |                          | \$55 per annum to receive newsletter (inc GST) |

Name of Foster Care Agency \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Foster Family \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to FCAV Inc and mail to: **FCAV  
PO Box 729  
Northcote  
VIC 3070**